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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: KATRINA ASSISTANCE, COMING TO CLOSURE

REF: SECSTATE 198690

¶1. (U) As per reftel request, on 17 December, Mission delivered a diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) formally requesting information on the status of disbursements of the outstanding \$48 million of \$100 million the SAG pledged for Hurricane Katrina assistance. We requested the MFA also pass the note to the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources (MOP) and Saudi Aramco. As per reftel request, we asked the SAG to consider making block grants to U.S. charitable organizations with the remaining funds and to provide a timetable for disbursement, if it intended to fulfill the remainder of its pledge.

¶2. (SBU) Post has requested Katrina disbursement information on at least six occasions during the last three months from the MOP, our designated point of contact for Katrina assistance. However, we have learned that Saudi Aramco's Houston office, the SAG entity charged with making actual disbursements in the U.S., claims to have encountered difficulties in identifying charities able to absorb efficiently the sums the SAG has attempted to donate. Saudi Aramco officials have indicated they are working to identify additional charities which can make proper use of these donations. In the meantime, the MOP claims to be stymied in their attempts to obtain disbursement status reports from Saudi Aramco. Saudi Aramco has been unwilling to speak directly with our Mission regarding the amounts disbursed, instead referring us to the MOP.

¶3. (SBU) We are hopeful a formal diplomatic note will finally enable us to obtain new information on the status of Hurricane Katrina aid disbursements, and will advise septel.

GFOELLER